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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission), at its Fourteenth Regular Session in April 2013, agreed on the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (Global Plan of Action)¹ and called upon countries to implement it. Subsequently, the Commission adopted the Strategy for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (the Strategy)² at its Fifteenth Regular Session in January 2015. The Commission stressed that the Strategy is fundamental for achieving the goals of the Global Plan of Action and called for the implementation of the Strategy in coordination with the Committee on Forestry and relevant international organizations.

2. Under the Strategy, FAO was requested to develop guidelines for the preparation of national forest programmes, as well as regional and national strategies and action plans for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources and, as appropriate, develop synergies with other relevant instruments and strategies, such as national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

3. This document provides brief information on the achievement of these stipulations and presents, in the *Appendix*, a possible outline of the guidelines for preparing national strategies for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN THE FOREST SECTOR

4. In the forest sector, it has long been recognized that a sectoral policy should contribute to the achievement of development goals of the whole society and that such policy should not only focus on outlining the principles and objectives for the management of forest resources. Subsequently, the development and implementation of forest policy in many countries have been based on a holistic and cross-sectoral approach, and also acknowledged the importance of conserving forest genetic resources.³

5. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1992, global and regional forest policy dialogues have made considerable progress in developing and promoting the concept of sustainable forest management. These efforts also produced another strategic concept, i.e. “national forest programmes” (NFPs) which covers a wide range of approaches used for forest policy formulation, planning and implementation at the national (or subnational) level. Such NFP involves a continuous communication and dialogue process that typically includes the following phases: 1) analysis, 2) policy formulation and planning, 3) implementation, and 4) monitoring and evaluation.⁴ An integral part of many NFPs is the establishment of forest forums or similar multi-stakeholder mechanisms which offer an opportunity to all relevant stakeholders within and outside of the forest sector to express their views on forest policy. It is widely acknowledged that NFPs play an important role in fostering sustainable forest management and in ensuring that the forest sector contributes to sustainable development.⁵

6. The NFPs are sometimes mistaken for “forest policy”, “forest strategy” or even “forest law”. As part of the international dialogue on forests, countries have agreed that the NFP refers to a comprehensive mechanism that is used for developing forest policy, related strategies and action plans, and for facilitating and monitoring their implementation.⁶ Forest policy, instead, is typically a

¹ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 52.

² CGRFA-15/15/Report, Appendix E.

³ FAO 1987. Guidelines for forest policy formulation. FAO Forestry Paper 81.

⁴ FAO 2006. Understanding national forest programmes: Guidance for practitioners.

⁵ FAO 2012. NFPs in practice: Ways to improve the implementation of national forest programmes.

⁶ FAO 2010. Developing effective forest policy: A guide. FAO Forestry Paper 161.

government document in which goals and objectives for the forest sector's contributions to sustainable development are set. A forest strategy describes how these goals and objectives will be achieved. The forest strategy is supported in many countries, as appropriate, by a separate forest legislation, which provides the legal framework for the implementation of the forest strategy. Action plans are then designed to operationalize the forest policy into concrete activities.

7. The NFPs are considered as the main mechanism for implementing the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (now called "the UN Forest Instrument"), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007⁷. The NFPs have also significantly contributed to the implementation of forest-related commitments of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in many countries. In addition, the NFPs are an appropriate mechanism for translating other forest-related international commitments into action at the national or sub-national level. As an example of this, many countries have integrated climate change mitigation and adaptation into their NFPs. FAO has also developed a guidance document to support this integration⁸.

8. The NFPs provide valuable lessons for the development and implementation of national strategies and action plans for forest genetic resources. Some countries have already integrated these resources into their NFPs and other countries have created linkages between the NFPs and those programmes and strategies that focus on forest genetic resources. Therefore, it is necessary that national strategies and action plans for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources will be developed and implemented in coordination with the NFPs.

III. PROPOSED SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

9. A national strategy for forest genetic resources (national FGR strategy) is a roadmap and an action plan for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources at the national (or sub-national) level. It should be based on the national status of forest genetic resources and their current level of management, and define time-bound goals for the conservation, sustainable use and development of these resources. Similarly to the NFPs, the national FGR strategy and its implementation should also be a continuous process, including monitoring of progress against targets and revision of the FGR strategy (e.g. every 10 years), as needed. In addition to the targets, the national FGR strategy should identify priorities for improving the management of forest genetic resources and related actions, as well as clarify responsibilities and mobilize resources for its implementation.

10. The main purpose of the national FGR strategy is to translate the Global Plan of Action into concrete activities at the national level but, additionally, it should be complementary to international agreements (e.g. CBD) and possible regional initiatives (e.g. regional FGR conservation strategies). Furthermore, the national FGR strategy should be fully in line with, and supportive to, other relevant national strategies and priorities related to forests, biodiversity, climate change, energy, nutrition, poverty reduction and development.

11. A possible outline of the guidelines for preparing a national FGR strategy is presented in the *Appendix*. It is proposed that the content of the guidelines will not include the preparation of National Forest Programmes as FAO has already prepared other guidelines for this purpose. Instead, the guidelines will describe how the national FGR strategy and its implementation can be integrated with the NFPs. It is further proposed that the guidelines will not include preparation of regional FGR strategies because the development of such regional strategies requires different mechanisms and methodologies as compared to the development of a national FGR strategy. Furthermore, several

⁷ A/RES/62/98.

⁸ FAO 2011. Climate change for forest policy-makers: An approach for integrating climate change into national forest programmes in support of sustainable forest management.

regional networks have already identified, or are in the process of identifying, regional priorities for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. In addition, some networks have also developed regional FGR conservation strategies. However, the guidelines will discuss how the national FGR strategies should be aligned with, and contribute to, these regional strategies. Finally, action plans are considered part of the national FGR strategies and are thus not reflected in the title of the guidelines.

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

12. The Working Group may wish to review and revise, as needed, the proposed outline and content of the guidelines.
13. The Working Group may wish to recommend that the Commission:
 - i) clarify the scope of the guidelines, taking into account that FAO has already developed guidelines for the preparation of national forest programmes and for the formulation of forest policy; and
 - ii) consider the proposed outline and content of the guidelines and provide further guidance, as needed, to the preparation of the guidelines.

Appendix

Draft outline of the guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources

Preface

I. Introduction

- Forest genetic resources (definition, value and importance, status, etc.)
- Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources
- Targets and indicators for forest genetic resources
- Need for a national strategy on forest genetic resources
- National strategies as building blocks of regional strategies on forest genetic resources
- Purpose of the guidelines and how to use them

II. Preparing the national strategy for forest genetic resources

- Establishing a coordinating mechanism at national level (e.g. national FGR programme or similar arrangement) and its linkages with relevant national processes and mechanisms
- Aligning national FGR strategy with relevant national policies and strategies (e.g. national forest policy, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, national adaptation strategies to climate change, national poverty reduction strategies)
- Assessing the status of conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources, as well as related policies, institutions and capacities (compilation and analysis of information and data available)
- Setting national targets
- Agreeing a road map to reach the targets
- Preparing national action plans
- Endorsing the national strategy

III. Implementing the national strategy for forest genetic resources

- Mobilizing resources
- The role of national forest programmes and other relevant national processes and mechanisms
- Monitoring and evaluation

III. Concluding remarks

References and annexes